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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1161  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE 4698  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 002024

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, CA/OCS, WHA/FO  
DEPT PLEASE PASS TO USAID/W AND USAID/OFDA  
SOUTHCOM PLEASE PASS TO JTF-BRAVO  
NSC FOR ALVARADO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [MASS](#) [AEMR](#) [KPAO](#) [NU](#)

SUBJECT: MANAGUA SITREP 1 AND COM DISASTER DECLARATION MESSAGE

11. (U) This cable includes a COM Disaster Declaration Message. PLEASE SEE PARA 4.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY. At 5:15 am local time on Tuesday, August 4, 2007, Hurricane Felix made landfall 20 miles north of the city of Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Initial reports from the region indicate that the category five storm has displaced more than 38,000 people in the Atlantic Region. More than 90 percent of houses in Puerto Cabezas have suffered severe structural damage; 80 percent of electrical and telecommunications infrastructure has been damaged. Access to remote areas of ordinarily-isolated Atlantic Region for assessments have been hampered by the fact that there are no all-weather roads at all between Puerto Cabezas and the rest of the country. As of late this afternoon, the storm had slowed in speed and intensity, which will likely result in heavy rainfall (over 400mm), flooding and landslides. The Nicaraguan Government has declared a state of emergency. Early this afternoon President Ortega spoke personally with the Ambassador who told him that Nicaragua "would be grateful for our help." We strongly believe it is in the USG interest to provide assistance to Nicaragua.

#### STORM STATUS AND DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

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13. (U) Hurricane Felix, a Category Five storm, made landfall at about 5:15am local time this morning 20 miles north of Puerto Cabezas. Initial reports from the region indicate that the storm has displaced more than 38,000 people in the Atlantic Region. Three Nicaraguan fatalities have been reported so far. More than 90 percent of houses in Puerto Cabezas have suffered severe structural damage; while in the communities of Sandy Bay and Bismona, all houses have been destroyed. The hospital in Puerto Cabezas was partially destroyed. 80 percent of electrical and telecommunications infrastructure in Puerto Cabezas has been damaged; while electricity and phones lines in many smaller communities have been destroyed. Access to remote areas of ordinarily-isolated Atlantic Region for assessments have been hampered by the fact that there are no all-weather roads at all between Puerto Cabezas and the rest of the country. As of late this afternoon, the storm had slowed in speed and intensity, which will likely result in heavy rainfall (over

400mm), flooding and landslides.

COM DISASTER DECLARATION MESSAGE

14. (U) At the end of a two-hour press conference this afternoon, the government announced that President Ortega had declared a state of emergency. Just prior to the press conference, the Ambassador spoke via phone with President Ortega who stated that this disaster was beyond the ability of Nicaragua to respond adequately and that he would be grateful for our help. He said the most urgent problem they faced was not having adequate capacity to reach isolated areas to make damage assessments and distribute relief supplies. He requested large helo lift support for this purpose. We strongly believe it is in the USG interest to provide assistance to Nicaragua. It is the Ambassador's view that:

-- This disaster is beyond Nicaragua's ability to respond.  
-- Nicaragua will accept USG assistance.  
-- It is in the interest of the USG to provide assistance.

Per section 4 of the SouthCom Guidance to SAOs and JTFs regarding Foreign Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief, the Ambassador also requests that the OFDA/DOS to DOD ExecSec memo move forward to formally request DOD assistance to provide relief.

ACS RESPONSE: NO REPORTS OF AMCIT INJURY OR DEATH

15. (SBU) The consular section has received one phone call and four email inquiries from American citizens regarding the status of Hurricane Felix. To date there are no/no reports of American citizen injuries or deaths. There are relatively few American citizens living in the remote north-east region of Nicaragua, the area most affected by Hurricane Felix. Only 49 American citizens are registered with the consular section in the RAAN, with 27 registered in neighboring state of Jinotega. The majority of Americans in this area are affiliated with missionary organizations. We have attempted to contact all of the wardens and registrants living in the areas most affected by Hurricane Felix, including the RAAN, and the states of Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, and Madriz. We have also contacted the major religious organizations that send American citizen missionaries out to these areas. We have spoken with some 20 people living in the affected area and all report extensive property damage but no American citizen injuries or deaths.

16. (SBU) Missionary-affiliated Americans in Puerto Cabezas reported that the high winds caused extensive damage, ripping roofs off houses, toppling down trees, and knocking houses off of their stilts. The missionaries were not aware of any injuries or deaths in the area but said they would pass on the Embassy's contact information and contact us immediately if they came across any American citizens in need of assistance. One of the Baptist missionaries reported that a group of 14 Americans who are there temporarily assisting with their ministry, including an 80 year-old woman, were all fine. The roof was blown off their house and the contents of their home severely damaged, but the group sought refuge in the basement and were not injured by the hurricane. The regional coordinator for the Sisters of St. Agnes reported that their convent in Waspam, a small town located along the Rio Coco River, suffered some damage but that all occupants, including one American citizen, were fine. The consular warden in Jinotega confirmed that they had not experienced injuries and that local groups were leading efforts to provide shelter and medical assistance. He believes there are about 12 American citizens in the area and is contacting them to ascertain their situation.

EMBASSY PLANNING AND RESPONSE

17. (SBU) The Embassy Hurricane Task Force met this morning

and this afternoon. We also participated in two Washington-organized teleconferences. We have been in contact with GON officials and counterparts throughout the day, receiving status reports and damage assessments. Late this morning, the Ambassador spoke with the Vice President and with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and offered an initial tranche of USD 25,000 in relief assistance authorized by USAID/OFDA for disaster preparedness. The country team has already begun the process to request additional assistance from USAID/OFDA. We are also working to facilitate the transport of OFDA personnel to the affected areas within the next 18 hours to conduct damage assessments and determine what additional USG assistance is appropriate.

#### PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OUTREACH

18. (U) We have prepared a press release offering our condolences to those who have been affected by the storm. It will also note that the U.S. has offered initial funds and is determining how best to respond to the GON request for assistance. We will continue to respond to media inquiries from local, regional and international outlets.  
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